Welcome to EU-PolarNet's third newsletter!

The EU-PolarNet newsletter is issued quarterly to inform you about news from the consortium and affiliated projects, to reflect on developments in European polar research and to give a glimpse on conferences and events coming up in near future. If you have any news, or would like to publicise an event, conference or course, or give us feedback please get in touch by emailing info@eu-polarnet.eu.

Content

- 2nd EU-PolarNet General Assembly
- Stakeholder Workshop: Arctic Health and Wellness
- A compilation of European Research Priorities
- Connecting Arctic researchers and industry
- "A central plank of the EU’s Arctic research efforts"
- EU-PolarNet on YouTube
- A glimpse on: Portuguese Polar Research
- Townhall Event in Brussels
- In memoriam
- Featured expedition: Arctic 100 Expedition
- Upcoming conferences and events
2nd EU-PolarNet General Assembly

The second EU-PolarNet General Assembly coincided with this year’s Arctic Science Summit Week in Fairbanks, Alaska. With one year into the project and four years to go, a timely occasion to both look back at what has been achieved so far and to look ahead towards upcoming tasks and challenges.

Starting off with a closed morning session, the progress of the project was discussed – ranging from submitted deliverables, to the consortium’s visibility at national and international workshops and conferences, international cooperation efforts and the contribution to recent and upcoming EU funded polar calls. In the afternoon anyone interested in EU-PolarNet’s work and upcoming tasks was invited to join the open part of the General Assembly. More than 50 people turned up to learn more about three main deliverables the consortium members are currently working on: a report on prioritised objectives in European polar research (with it’s public consultation ending just five days earlier), a European Polar Infrastructure Catalogue and a Stakeholder Map.

With one of the project’s main objectives being a sustained and on-going dialogue with all relevant stakeholders for the Polar Regions, a major part of the General Assembly’s afternoon session was devoted to questions around how to best involve stakeholders in the project. Annette Scheepstra from the University of Groningen presented the Stakeholder Map, she and her colleagues had been working on for the past months. Together with the report on research priorities it served as a starting point for a subsequent interactive exercise, in which the audience was prompted to identify research areas that could be of interests for stakeholders and – in a second step – to phrase research questions, which are likely to be directly relevant to different stakeholder groups. The meeting thus concluded with a collection of insightful suggestions on stakeholder relevant research topics and associated questions.

Thank you to everyone, who attended our General Assembly – we are looking forward to seeing you – at the latest – at the ASSW in Prague next year!

Stakeholder Workshop: Arctic Health and Wellness

Within the framework of the Arctic Science Summit Week 2016 and just a day before EU-PolarNet’s General Assembly, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) organised the project’s first stakeholder workshop in Fairbanks, Alaska. AMAP is a partner in EU-PolarNet and is responsible to hold international stakeholder workshops, which are set to determine priority research needs that can be provided as input to the Integrated European Polar Research Programme, which the consortium is developing, as well as to enhance trans-Atlantic research cooperation.

Themed “Research Needs for Arctic Health and Wellness”, this first workshop convened more than 50 participants with expertise or interest in health-related issues in relation to Arctic residents. Eleven experts on Arctic health and wellbeing had been asked to give local, regional and circumpolar insight to a wide range of health-related topics in the Arctic, including exposure to environmental contaminants in local food species, increasing animal-
borne diseases and mental health problems related to climate change, suicide prevention, and health infrastructure.

Triggered by the input of the presentations, discussions arose around topics that need further research efforts. Climate change impacts on health and wellbeing, it was stated on various occasions, should be a main priority for research in the Arctic. This includes obtaining a good data set on various public health variables and multilevel interventions. Further, an emphasis was put on local capacity building and the need to have research generated from indigenous communities as well as to take research results to indigenous communities in a way that they can understand and use them.

The full report of the workshop will soon be available on the EU-PolarNet website.

A compilation of European Research Priorities

Over the past months the EU-PolarNet consortium has compiled European research priorities for the Polar Regions. These priorities were firstly identified by a desk study on 146 national Polar strategies, international consortia and major scientific clusters. The extracted information was subsequently analysed, prioritized and finally synthesised into twelve broad and overarching topics.

In order to get feedback on this synthesis from the wider scientific community and interested stakeholders, the compilation and list of consulted documents were opened up for a public and anonymous consultation. During a three-week period 236 people from 23 countries participated in the survey and stated, if their national priorities were reflected in the compilation, if all societal challenges had been addressed, what European polar research should focus on in its discussions with stakeholders and if any documents had been overlooked.

The survey showed: In total 46 per cent of the participants felt that their national priorities were well represented in the compilation; 42 per cent found them to be fairly and twelve per cent poorly included. In regard to the societal challenges, 49 per cent stated that there are challenges that have not been addressed in the document; whereas just 22 per cent said that important documents were missing in the compilation.

We want to use this opportunity to thank everybody, who participated in the public consultation. Your feedback is momentarily still carefully evaluated and will be taken into consideration for the revisions of the document. Updates about the compilation of the European research priorities will be posted on the EU-PolarNet website.

For anyone interested in having a look at the current compilation and list of references, you can download them here.
Connecting Arctic researchers and industry

How can an open, productive and respectful dialogue between stakeholders from industry and scientists be established for increasing mutual understanding and identifying new ways of working for ensuring economic and societal benefits? This was the lead question framing EU-PolarNet’s session “Connecting Arctic researchers and industry: a dialogue for societal benefit” at this year’s Adaptation Futures Conference under Theme 7 “The Arctic”.

Adaptation Futures is the biennial conference of the Global Programme of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation, which took place 10th to 13th May 2016 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Set out to engage scientists, practitioners, policymakers and business people from all around the world the conference offered a good opportunity for EU-PolarNet to engage with various stakeholders, especially industry representatives.

The aim of the project's session was to improve mutually beneficial engagement and interaction between EU-PolarNet participants and stakeholders from industry, the international research community, as well as the wider society, including young people. To enable an open discussion focused on the societal and economic impacts of Arctic change and its effects on the sustainable development of the region, four presentations gave an insight to various aspects of Arctic change and development: EU-PolarNet project manager, Nicole Biebow (AWI) started off with an introduction of the role of EU-PolarNet in better addressing societal needs in polar research. She was followed by Coco Smits from the Royal Haskoning DHV, who spoke about the concept of social licenses to operate in the Arctic and specifically looked into oil and gas development in Greenland.

Dmitry Yumanshev, post-doc within the ICE-ARC project, subsequently shed light on the regional and global socio-economic costs of Arctic change with a special focus on black carbon emissions. He noted, that Arctic change will bring out clear ‘winners’ and ‘loser’: For example, a range of European countries and China are likely to be amongst the winners by receiving greater economic benefits from the new routes. On the other hand, the Arctic region is suffering from the ecological damage new shipping routes are possibly inflicting. Finally, Keijo Salenius from the Basecamp Oulanka in Finland presented the interplay between climate change and eco tourism, stating that climate change will open up opportunities for tourism in the Arctic as the regions become warmer.

Given that changes in the Arctic are already having a major impact around the world, the conference’s newspaper “Daily Adapt” highlighted, “this region should be of major interest to everybody.” Yet, attendance was “a bit on the light side”, thus limiting the discussion on societal and economic impacts of Arctic change.
“A central plank of the EU’s Arctic research efforts”

On the 27th April 2016 the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, presented the new EU Joint Communication on the Arctic, headed “An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic”. It is the EU’s third policy statement on the Arctic and highlights the Union's three “priority areas”:

- Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment;
- Sustainable Development in and around the Arctic;
- International Cooperation on Arctic Issues.

Central to any of these three areas are science, research and innovation – both in terms of gaining a deeper understanding of the Arctic regions, especially in the face of climate change, and as a diplomatic tool, which can serve as “a catalyst to support a common understanding, enabling jointly agreed solutions to be reached and foster peaceful cooperation”. The communication therefore emphasises the EU’s role as a “global leader in science” and as major (financial) contributor to Arctic research, stating that current funding levels for research in the Arctic are expected to be maintained.

So far EU-PolarNet has already played an important role in supporting the EU in Arctic scientific related topics, for example by being involved in shaping three calls dedicated solely to Arctic research within the Horizon2020 work programme for 2016-2017. And given EU-PolarNet’s objectives to develop a strategic framework to prioritise science, optimise the use of polar infrastructure, and to broker new transnational partnerships, the Joint Communication has now termed the consortium “a central plank of the EU's Arctic research efforts”.

Additionally, the integrated policy for the Arctic brings forward the role of space programmes and the Svalbard Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System, assisting in pan-Arctic monitoring of the weather, climate variables, ice thickness, and improved ocean modelling. As well as it highlights the importance of scientific cooperation at an international level, such as the Transatlantic Ocean (and Arctic) Research Alliance, which involves the EU, Canada and the US. Furthermore it acknowledges the need to work together with Arctic states, indigenous peoples and relevant Arctic regional and multilateral fora “to share experience, expertise and information on climate change, impacts, adaptation and resilience, with a view to developing an ambitious climate adaptation agenda for the Arctic region.”

Karin Lochte, EU-PolarNet’s project coordinator stated in an interview on the new Joint Communication in “Horizon”, the EU Research & Innovation Magazine, 'I think the priorities are right and I am very happy that research has been given an important place. We still need to do a lot of basic science in the Arctic and we need to have observation data in the Arctic to understand, for instance, how the disappearance of sea ice influences the weather over Europe.'
EU-PolarNet on YouTube

EU-PolarNet is on Youtube! Visit our [channel](#) to view film clips and interviews with our consortium members, for example on why the Polar Regions are important for Europe.

A glimpse on: Portuguese Polar Research

– *given by Maria Teresa Cabrita and Gonçalo Vieira*

How has polar research in Portugal developed in the past decades?

Polar research in Portugal goes back to the beginning of the 70s with the work of the marine biologist and oceanographer Luiz Saldanha in the subantarctic islands of Kerguelen and in the Arctic. Since then and for the following decade, polar research was conducted independently by few Portuguese scientists, integrated in international research groups and projects. The consolidation of Portuguese Polar research resulted from activities to promote polar science and research, carried out by the national Committee for the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008. This event was the starting point to establish the foundations for a Portuguese Polar Program, a task promoted by the Portuguese Polar science community. The Scientific Strategy for the IPY, had three goals: i. developing a Portuguese Polar Program focusing on research and innovation, ii. signing the Antarctic Treaty, and iii. promoting a national program for Polar education and outreach. In 2007, the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) implemented the Portuguese Polar Program (PROPOLAR) and funded research projects on atmospheric physics, cryosphere and polar biology, in the sub-Antarctic and the Antarctic. ([read more](#))

Why is Portugal involved in studying Polar Regions?

Although the Polar Regions are far from Portugal, their dynamics affect the entire planet. The Portuguese science community aims at contributing to the understanding of the Earth system, and particularly on how it reacts to human induced pressure, as Portugal is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change in Europe. Temperature and precipitation changes are already affecting Portugal, as well as increasing extreme events such as severe droughts, storms, floods and heat waves, with significant consequences to ecosystem functioning and dynamics, and therefore to human populations, fisheries, forestry and other natural resources. Portugal also aims at benefiting of the excellent conditions of the Polar Regions as vantage points for conducting research in the frontiers of science, with strong international cooperation and excellent conditions for technological development and cutting-edge research.

How is the Portuguese polar community set up?

Polar research in Portugal is currently carried out at about 15 universities and public research institutes from various areas, mostly in the fields of natural sciences, with a special focus on biological, environmental and the Earth Sciences. Although with a recent history, the community is very active in both SCAR and IASC. Annually, the Portuguese Conference on Polar Sciences is organized, gathering about 50 participants during a 2 or 3-day event, where most recent results are presented and the needs for the future are discussed.

[www.eu-polarnet.eu](http://www.eu-polarnet.eu)
What are the current initiatives of the Portuguese Polar Program (PROPOLAR)?

The Portuguese Polar Program working in close connection with the Polar Office from FCT is the organization coordinating the Portuguese Polar campaigns. Since Portugal has no permanent infrastructure in the Polar Regions, research is based on international cooperation and on the management and sharing of an Antarctic flight offered to partner programs. In the past five years, PROPOLAR has funded 49 research projects, provided access of 22 Portuguese scientists per year to the Polar Regions, and supported and managed 10 Antarctic flights, ensuring transport for 429 passengers and cooperating with 7 national polar programs. (have a look at the missions)

What is the status of polar research in Portugal?

Portuguese polar research is now well established and nationally recognized as decisive to the increasing knowledge of the Earth system and its responses to ever-increasing human pressures, and particularly to the understanding of the impacts of climate change. A long-term vision and integrated strategic plan for the Portuguese polar science is currently being prepared to provide clear overarching objectives and guidelines to the Portuguese polar science. This plan will reflect major scientific and societal issues to help Portugal dealing with developing resilience to environmental hazards and managing environmental change, as well as continuing to answer fundamental questions on the functioning of the Earth System.

What are new initiatives of the Portuguese Polar Program?

The Portuguese Polar Program is engaging in new initiatives to better support the polar scientific community:

- Enhance support for polar logistics and science
- Develop fundraising activities to support young researchers
- Link polar science to technology, industry and policy-making
- Create a national integrated multidisciplinary polar database

Townhall Event in Brussels

The organization is in full swing: On Tuesday, 27th September 2016 EU-PolarNet will host a major Townhall Event in Brussels. The event will take place in the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, which is located just a few steps from the European Parliament. Themed “Towards the 1.5°C climate goal – Contributions of Polar Research” the Townhall’s objective is twofold: On one hand keynote addresses and panel sessions are aimed at to provide polar stakeholders from various backgrounds with an insight on how polar research can support evidence-based decision making in the face of climate change. On the other hand arising discussions between the science community, policy makers, as well as representatives from business, indigenous communities and civil society will generate a deeper understanding of what society needs from polar scientists. The event will be by invitation only, hosting a total of 150 participants. Confirmed keynote speakers so far include the former French Prime Minister and architect of the Madrid Protocol, Michel Rocard, and the Swiss climate scientist, Thomas Stocker. If you are interested in participating please let us know via info@eu-polarnet.eu and stay tuned for the detailed programme and list of speakers and panellists.
In memoriam

We are very sorry to announce that our much-valued colleague Ruth Driver-Breen from the British Antarctic Survey team has passed away. This is deeply shocking news for our entire consortium and our thoughts are with Ruth’s family and her colleagues.

Featured expedition: Arctic 100 Expedition

Arctica Ltd. welcomes partners for an international Arctic expedition in summer 2017 in the Nansen and Amundsen Basins, with an option for the Canada Basin. The icebreaker holds a polar 10 class and has capacity for up to 70 researchers. Estimated daily cost of the vessel (50–75.000€) will be shared by research institutes and participants. Final terms and conditions will be agreed upon with each participant. For more information and contact details please download the Arctic 100 flyer.

Upcoming conferences and events

International Conference on Permafrost
Date: 20th - 24th June 2016
Location: Potsdam, Germany

SCAR Open Science
Date: 20th – 30th August 2016
Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
More information: http://www.scar2016.com

UArctic Congress
Date: 12th - 16th September 2016
Location: St. Petersburg, Russia

ICES ASC / EU-PolarNet-AMAP Stakeholder Workshop
Date: 19th - 23rd September 2016
Location: Riga, Latvia

The second AMAP/EU-PolarNet Stakeholder Workshop on "Research Needs on Arctic Ecosystems and Ecosystem Services" will engage participants representing not only scientists and the research community but also various other stakeholders with interests associated with Arctic marine ecosystem services, including fisheries, shipping, and tourism. The program for this workshop will be prepared after the full roster of presentations in the scientific session in the morning have been determined.
Get in touch with EU-PolarNet

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